II. Military Organization

701 An army, properly speaking, with cadres and hierarchies, did not exist among the Mossi.

721 In the event of war, the Tansoba or Tampsoba (war minister) notified the canton chiefs who promptly assembled with all their able-bodied men and as many horsemen as possible.

705 The villages were charged with feeding the soldiers.

III. Judicial Organization

692 693 Justice was rendered in conformity with local customs which had been handed down from generation to generation and according to local practice.

1. By village chiefs, assisted by some of the elders, for petty affairs, pilfering, and insults.

2. The canton chief, assisted by his court dignitaries and the minister, ruled on matters concerning theft, adultery, and bodily attacks, as well as on other matters.

3. The Mogho Naba took cognizance of all matters of general interest, especially with crimes of assassination and murder. In theory, he could by himself pronounce the death sentence on the [565] nakomsé [descendants of Mogho Naba]. Contrary to general belief, a [56] kombéré (canton chief) also had the power of life and 661 death over his subjects. How many individuals have been put to death merely because they were wealthy! How many village chiefs have been killed by the canton chiefs over their territories without any intervention by the Mogho Naba! The nakomsé could 565 be executed, however, only for very serious crimes, such as 684 adultery with a woman of the nobility. The guilty man was led ● 762 into the bush by old nakomsé; they gave him a rope with which he was expected to hang himself and thus expiate his crime.

694 Justice was free; no fee was expected or assessed. The plaintiff, 431 however, customarily presented the naba with a white or light gray rooster, accompanied by the traditional satchel containing from 200 to 1,000 cowries.

701 oppose me. I therefore demand that his fez be returned to me."
687 To take away the fez of a naba is to dethrone him and reduce him to the level of his subjects.

The court officials, including the Tansoba, at once send emissaries to the chief at fault, asking him to choose between suicide (some take a poison called sounadré, while others kill themselves with a poisoned arrow) and war with the Mogho Naba.

If the chief is not prepared for such a summons, he kills himself, and the envoys return with the news.

669 If, on the other hand, he declares that he wants pouwega, that
701 is, war and a noble death, he sends back the representatives of the ministers. A few days later, with drums beating and the Tansoba, chief of the army, at its head, the whole warrior band appears before his walls.

The Tansoba sends the Samandé Naba to the chief to ask him to confirm his declaration of war. If the naba still wants war, he usually replies: "Ya yingri bala la ka sakéniân."

The Tansoba withdraws, sending word to the chief [68] to expect him back on a stated day (seven or eight days later); this period of time will enable the chief to assemble his warriors also. When the day arrives, it is a merciless battle, a massacre.

727 Often the forces of the Mogho Naba are victorious, and in that event the slaves, livestock, and other property go to those who seized them. Only the corpses belong to the Tansoba.

701 If an arrow, even a poisoned one, wounds the Tansoba, he
577 must under no circumstances pull it out. Indeed, he must often endure thirst and hunger, and it is only when he is at rest in an enclosed place that the arrows are removed from his body. It should
[789] be noted that since the Tansoba's costume is virtually covered with amulets and other charms, he is not very likely to be wounded seriously by an arrow. This is not, of course, to belittle his bravery and composure in the face of danger, since he is expected
[762] never to retreat and, if the enemy is victorious, often prefers to kill himself rather than to report a defeat to the Mogho Naba.

644 There are, in addition to the foregoing, a great many petty naba whose role is not clearly defined and of whom it seems needless to speak.

755 must be procured. The leaf used to cover a wound must be held by means of a thin cotton cord with cowries attached at the end, three cowries for a boy, four for a girl. A hemp cord with three or four knots, worn around the neck, wrist, or any other part of the body, prevents swelling of that part and is also a master remedy against hair worms. Sometimes it is not so easy to secure the prescribed amulet, for instance, if it is the beak or claw of a hawk, a deer horn, or certain parts of a buffalo or koba. The poor Mossi goes to great pains to find this indispensable amulet.

763 Do as he may, sooner or later he must die. When an old man feels that his end is near, he calls his family and gives them his last instructions. He talks to his eldest son and tells him where his cattle and caches are to be found, who are his debtors and creditors. Sometimes death comes swiftly without warning, and the old man has no time to talk to his heir; a large part of the fortune is thus lost, because a Mossi in good health never tells anybody, especially not his /68/ children, where his property is, and those to whom he has entrusted it do not return it. Some Peul have made rather nice profits in this fashion.

761 The death of a young man or woman or more especially that of a small child is usually ascribed to an old woman who is said to have 754 eaten the child's soul, and some old women claim to have this secret. [683] The sorcerer points out the guilty woman who is seized and put to death. Every sudden or accidental death is ascribed to an evil spirit, and the funeral ceremonies reflect this.

762 Suicide is extremely rare, but it does occur. Here is one case where we knew the participants. A man quarreled with his wife. The wife, who was stronger than her husband, overwhelmed him in the fight, and the neighbors openly ridiculed him. The following [766] day the husband was found hanging in his hut. A pit was hastily dug in his nearest field, and he was tossed into it naked without further ceremony. Suicide is regarded as a criminal act, and even the corpse is punished for it.

763 Like all human beings, the Mossi fear death. No longer to eat millet mush or to drink dolo seems to them the greatest of misfortunes. Still, when a Mossi sees death approaching, he resigns himself to it and accepts it stoically. He rests his head on the lap of his first wife, and his other wives gather around him. His friends and the village elders sit before the soukala, and all wait silently for hours until the

775 ground; he also pours what is left at the bottom of the gourd, so the
769 souls will rejoice with him. It is considered a great honor when a
[554] naba tells an elder to grasp one side of the gourd and to pour along with him.

775 One must not laugh about the souls of the deceased and their visits
761 to earth. If you doubt their return, listen to what an old naba once told me. "One day, I had gone to visit a naba, my friend and neighbor. We had arranged to meet at his house with another neighboring chief. He gave us a very nice welcome, and the day was most pleasant. We were resting at night in the shelter of his soukala when we were suddenly awakened by the sound of harness bells and horses galloping. On the following day we left our host. No sooner had we left than he took ill. A week later he died. The souls had come to fetch him. Oh! Father, do not laugh about the souls of the deceased!" And the good old man trembled with emotion. This is what our Mossi believe. They firmly believe in all these ghost stories.

775 Are the souls reincarnated? Small children who die before the age of reason are said to return in the person of the first child borne by their mother. This is why, especially if the mother has lost several
[304] children in a row, the baby is marked at birth with distinctive signs, particularly tattooings on the belly and lower back; sometimes, if he
[764] dies, a piece of his ear is cut off, or a toe or finger joint broken. It is said that the child born next will bear the same marks, but no living example of this could be cited. Often, the mother leaves the hut where her baby died. An old woman spreads ashes before the door in the evening, and if small footprints are found in the morning, it is a sign that the child came back and wishes to return to his mother's bosom.

Rebirth is not granted to anyone other than young children, not even to young unmarried people. They remain in the place of the souls for years on end, the number of which cannot be ascertained, and no distinction is made between the rich and the poor, the powerful and their subjects.

775 The soul of suicides, cursed in death, is not entitled as a rule to
762 funeral ceremonies. It wanders through the world without harming anyone, but unable to find rest.

577 Morality is reduced to its simplest expression. Whatever harms
673 other people is bad. Think your own intimate thoughts and desire anything you like; as long as you do no harm to your fellow man, no fault has been committed. Fornication and adultery are faults only

593 not shelter her but must on the contrary return her to her husband.
562 If difficulties arise, the husband appeals to the naba, who forces the wife to return to her husband, at whose hands she will get a beating when she arrives....

"...The powers of a deceived husband over his wife's lover
593 were quite fearsome prior to our occupation. He could, at will,
837 either deal with the culprit himself or defer his complaint to the
684 naba. If he dealt himself with his rival and killed him, he handed out the adulterous woman to the Moro Naba and did not have to answer for his crime. If he merely wounded the man, no matter how seriously, he was regarded as having acted in the fullness of his rights as an injured husband, and he kept the wife and gave her a beating. If he appealed to the naba, the guilty pair were punished by being put in irons for a variable period of time. Furthermore, if the adultery had been committed with the wife of a dapouy naba of the Moro Naba (that is to say, a man to whom the Moro Naba had himself given some girl in marriage), the accomplice was compelled to pay the deceived husband a fine of 100,000 cowries.

"Finally, in case of adultery with a chief's wife, both culprits were put to death."

On this subject I find in my notes that prior to our occupation, when a naba was deceived by one of his wives, he killed her with
● [762] poison and ordered the wife's lover to commit suicide. The latter did this by plunging the head of a poisoned arrow into the calf of his leg.

"It is plain," the author of the Monographie goes on to say, "that the lover was dealt with in the most rigorous manner of all. He could be put to death by the deceived husband in every case, while the wives of a chief were alone liable to supreme punishment. The lover could also be punished with a fine, in a single case anticipated by custom. Finally, he was invariably put in irons on the naba's orders if the deceived husband placed a complaint against him.

"As for the adulterous wife, except when she was /563/ handed over to the Moro Naba by her husband as reparation for the murder of her partner, punishment for her misdemeanor amounted merely to a more or less rigorous beating or to irons for a short period of time. She could, it is true, be turned out by her husband, but the latter

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tween the Mossi and several other ethnic groups. In each instance the structural relationship in which joking occurs is characterized by the five features listed above.

Joking with the Mother's Brother

The relationship with a maternal uncle is marked by all five of the structural features mentioned. Separation results from the rules of patrilineal descent and inheritance rules, from patrisib exogamy, and from the general observance of patrilocal residence. The relationship is reciprocal in that a mother's brother serves throughout Ego's life as an important alternative source of emotional, economic, and social support: he often acts as intermediary in disputes between Ego and his parents or the elders of his lineage; he gives Ego frequent gifts; and residence in the mother's patriclan is the most frequent alternative to patrilocality. In turn Ego, as a result of the permissive relationship he enjoys with the spirits of his deceased cognatic kinsmen, often serves their living descendants as an intermediary in their ritual efforts to maintain a secure relationship with the ancestral spirits.

Ambivalence between Ego and his mother's brother and her other kin results from the conflicting sources of "conjunction" and "dissociation" just mentioned. The conflict between a strong affective bond—a "feeling" of kinship—and a system of inheritance which denies it jural recognition generates frustration. The ambivalence in the relationship is manifested not only by joking, which is asymmetrical—with Ego being the more aggressive—but by theft as well. Perhaps as partial compensation for his inability to inherit matrilaterally, Ego is permitted to steal his mother's brother's property during his lifetime and can also make off with the beer and some of the animals collected for his funeral.

As for equality of status, the descent groups of Ego and mother's brother are structurally equivalent. Although their respective positions within these two groups differ, the permissiveness of Ego's relationship to his maternal uncle absolves him from recognition of the canons of comportment that otherwise prevail among the Mossi in relations between persons of differing status. Indeed, disregard for such status differences is part of the "joke." Independence is assured by the fact that Ego and his mother's brother are members of autonomous descent groups and that each is responsive only to the authority of his respective lineage elders.

Joking with a Mother's Brother's Wife

Joking between Ego and his mother's brother's wife is to be regarded as a separate relationship because of her nonmembership in the mother's brother's descent group, but certain of the structural circumstances are similar. The source of separation from the mother's brother's wife is evident. The reciprocal tie that unites them is indirect; when Ego is received warmly in his mother's brother's household it is the wife of the latter who prepares the food he is given. Similarly, as a member of her husband's patriclan, she benefits

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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dom during the interregnum.[23] The latter task was especially suited to a prime minister, since the Mossi regarded the interregnum as the most difficult period in their political life. The Ouidi Naba's administrative tasks were considered so important that he never went to war and was theoretically immune from punishment or execution by the Mogho Naba. This immunity was necessary, because the Mogho Naba had the right to execute anyone who brought him unwelcome news, and often did so. Since the Ouidi Naba announced good news as well as bad, it would have been folly to subject him to this rule. Some reports in the French colonial archives state that the Mogho Naba was expected to follow the Ouidi Naba's advice at all times, and could not veto any of his actions. These reports add, moreover, that if a Ouidi Naba considered a Mogho Naba dangerous for the welfare of the country, he could rightfully compel the ruler to kill himself. According to Lambert, one Ouidi Naba known as Baba forced Mogho Naba Karfo (ca. 1800) to commit suicide. It appears that aside from waging a long and unpopular war against Naba Djighima of Lalle, this Mogho Naba had seized the riches of his wealthy subjects for distribution among the poor. Moreover, he allegedly dispensed justice without making much distinction between nobles and commoners, which so displeased the nobles that they encouraged the Ouidi Naba to put Karfo to death. Baba sent the sovereign a poisoned arrow and a message consisting of a single word: *ki* (die). Karfo allegedly committed suicide that very night.[24]

Thus, it appears that under certain conditions the prime minister could impeach his "all-powerful" sovereign. We cannot assume, however, that all prime ministers were sufficiently powerful to control the Mogho Naba. Many Mogho Nanamse limited their Ouidi Naba to merely giving advice on affairs of state and insisted that he concern himself solely with his own province.

The provinces administered by the five ministers were made up of smaller entities or districts. The districts in the provinces of the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, and the Gounga Naba were ruled by the sons and other descendants of ancient Mogho Nanamse. The province controlled by the Kamsaogho Naba was more important. His districts were the wealthiest and among the most populous in the nation, and they brought the largest revenues to the Mogho Naba. The reason for this, of course, was that the Kamsaogho Naba was a eunuch and had no heirs; when he died, all his riches reverted to the Mogho Naba. The province controlled by the Baloum Naba was the most difficult to administer. Its districts were ruled by the sons of recent Mogho Nanamse who felt that as holders of the nam they were free to appropriate the goods of the population. The Baloum

634 687 against the Mogho Naba. I say "allegedly" because it was never quite clear whether the district chief was at fault or whether the Mogho Naba wanted to replace him for dynastic reasons. For example, Tanga, a district chief, was accused by Mogho Naba Sanum (1850–90) of withholding tribute and of maladministration. The Ouidi Naba who administered Tanga's district advised him to prove his innocence by making a sacrifice on Naba Oubri's tomb, and then go to Ouagadougou and ask the Mogho Naba's forgiveness. 634 687 662 Tanga agreed to do so. But it appears that the Mogho Naba, who wished to place his own father's brother in Tanga's place, did not want a reconciliation. He waged war on Tanga, and seized his relatives, retainers, and cattle. Tanga tried to regain his losses by appealing to his provincial minister, but the minister told him that the Mogho Naba had distributed the livestock and had sold the people to Hausa traders. Moreover, he informed Tanga that he could not help him because the Mogho Naba could do as he [669] pleased. Tanga thereupon decided to take matters into his own hands. He successfully attacked the Mogho Naba's villages, and was still a rebel when the French arrived shortly afterward.[26]

634 687 669 Tanga's action was unusual, for district chiefs seldom risked rebelling against the Mogho Naba when accused of maladministration. In 1895, for example, Koabga, chief of Doulougou district in the province of the Gounga Naba, took poison rather than wage war when Mogho Naba Wobogo accused him of misgovernment. Usually, a district chief who disobeyed an order of the Mogho Naba was summoned to the capital to answer the charge of lese majesty. If he was found guilty, the ruler knocked the bonnet off his head, thus deposing him, and had him strangled. The Mossi seldom spilled royal blood. A district chief who refused to go to Ouagadougou [762] could either kill himself (traditionally by taking arsenic) or resort to civil war.[27] If he chose suicide, he was given an honorable burial as though he had died naturally. If the Mogho Naba sent down an army, however, the offending chief was invariably killed. His compound was burned, his slaves and cattle were seized, and his allies and immediate relatives were compelled to flee. The strength of this tradition is borne out by Tanga's case. He had successfully resisted the attempts of two Mogho Nanamse to bring him to heel, and was still at large when the French conquered the country. [648] But Ouidi Naba Koabga, who had deserted his sovereign and selected Kouka Koutou as Mogho Naba under French orders, had not forgiven Tanga. When the French asked him what additional steps they should take to pacify the country, he asked them to capture Tanga. The unfortunate district chief was captured, placed on an unsaddled colt, and taken to Ouagadougou, where he was ignominiously executed.[28]

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686 634 692 died while he was using it, the owner could not press any claims. However, the borrower was obliged to sell the animal's flesh and give the money to the owner along with the animal's skin as proof of its death. Under no circumstances would a district chief absolve a man from paying the market value of an animal if he failed to return the skin. Such failure would brand him as a thief and involve an additional fine.

685 [674] The Mossi considered theft a major crime. A thief could be killed with impunity if he was caught in the act and in the presence of several witnesses. If these conditions were not met but the man killed was known to have been a thief, the killer was fined several cows. But if he was known to have been a man of good character, the killer ran the risk of being executed. In this way, the Mossi tried to prevent any abuse of an accepted practice. The theft of grain and other foodstuffs was considered especially reprehensible, because it was held to indicate that the thief was so depraved that he would not even grow his own food. During the rule of Naba Kaglere of Nobere district (1888–1906), a man called Yahiya left his own village of Donse and went to a village called Quitenga to steal sweet potatoes. The people of that village caught him in the act and shot him with a poisoned arrow as he made his escape. Yahiya died without revealing the source of his wound, and his babissi, suspecting foul play, asked Kaglere to investigate. When the Quitenga people learned of the investigation, they went forward voluntarily and reported the circumstances under which they had wounded Yahiya. Kaglere absolved them of all guilt and told the Donse people that Yahiya had deserved to die, not only because he had stolen food (which he might have received if he had asked for it), but because sweet potatoes were the easiest vegetable to cultivate.

685 [682] A thief who was too clever to be caught in the act but who was apprehended afterwards was treated quite harshly by the Mossi court. Here, the penalty of double indemnity was often applied. A man who was brought to court for stealing a chicken or guinea hen was fined a goat or a sheep. Hence the Mossi proverb "Zou noaga ronda bouga"—"He who steals a chicken repays a goat." The thief who stole one cow had to return several. If a thief could not pay the fine, he was placed in stocks until his relatives paid for him. If they refused to do so, the chief's retainers seized their property, sold it, and made restitution. This often compelled the family of a recidivous thief to make him commit suicide. If the family would not resort to this, the district chief had the man seized and clubbed to death.[7] Sometimes the chief sent recidivists to the Mogho Naba, who sent them to a village called Teemetenga to be made into eunuchs.[8]

[696] [762] [634]

[565] [579] The Mossi seem to have made a distinction between theft and pillage—

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000 19. There is a curious story among the people of Nobere district that Mogho Naba Mottoba (who reigned in the seventeenth century) was not a Mossi but a Fulani who was given the nam after he chanced upon the installation ceremony and assassinated the newly elected man during the night. This story is denied in Ouagadougou; in fact, it contradicts the genealogical records of the ruling dynasty. However, the genealogy does show that Mottoba's father, Mogho Naba Guiliga, had succeeded his brother, and it is possible that there was dynastic rivalry for the nam between Mottoba and the former Mogho Naba's son. [174]

20. This rite was performed during the installation of the present Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, although it is hardly recognizable as described in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48): "A man named Moussa Congo assumed the name of Kougri Naba last week and became the 35th Mogho Naba of the Mossi in the capital city of Ouagadougou in the Upper Volta region of French West Africa. Son of Emperor Issoufou Congo, Kougri Naba, as the new Mogho Naba, has one white horse, 200 wives, and 8,000 warriors, who danced around his palace ten times." [182]

21. This practice has apparently lapsed since Mogho Naba Kougri moved into the modern concrete palace built for his father, Mogho Naba Sagha II.

22. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 569–70. Tauxier claims the Mogho Nanamse used the pages for homosexual purposes on Fridays in order to circumvent the Moslem prohibition against intercourse with women on this holy day. Homosexuality is rare among the Mossi, as Tauxier himself admits, and most Mossi deny that the Mogho Nanamse ever resorted to it. However, one respondent did state that he had heard about homosexuality among certain past rulers. [838]

23. Crozat, p. 4849.

24. When Mogho Naba Kom II died under mysterious circumstances in 1942, it was rumored that he had committed suicide rather than reduce the number of his wives as ordered by the administration under the influence of the Catholic missionaries. Kom allegedly held that no one can inherit a sovereign's wife during his lifetime. Therefore, in order to avoid loss of status by seeing his wives go to commoners, he chose death so they would be inherited by nobles. [648] [762] [797]

25. The statement in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48) that Kougri has two hundred wives is untrue. [114]

26. Intermarriage between the Mossi and the Fulani has produced a people known as the Simili-Mossi. Nevertheless, the Mossi are strongly prejudiced against the Fulani, especially against the women, stating that the Moaga who has sexual intercourse with a Fulani woman must bathe in nine different rivers before he becomes clean. The basis of this prejudice appears to be that Fulani women are not cultivators and therefore are unacceptable as Mossi wives. [563]

27. Mossi women know a great deal about the history and traditions of their people. But they never indicate that they do except during such rituals, when they are required to play certain roles.

28. Dim Delobson, p. 96.

29. Dim Delobson (p. 101) states that there are "sacred things" in this village, but I have been unable to substantiate his report.

30. Dim Delobson (p. 104) gives the classic explanation of this nighttime ride. On his ride from Bere to Djiba, the mounted prince must try to touch a certain branch of a certain tree. If he is destined to succeed his father, he will succeed in touching the branch; if he is not, the branch will magically withdraw at his approach. [824]

I visited the area in which this ritual reportedly took place, but the people in the vicinity denied that such a tree existed.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

32. IFAN (Compte Rendu No. 429). There are many other rumors concerning Kom's death. In a book praising the loyalty of the Africans to the Free French Gov- [648]